

REMARKS

Claims 1-18 were examined in the Final Office Action mailed June 2, 2006.

Claims 1-18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,952,370 to Cummings, *et al.* ("Cummings"), in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,572,819 B2 to Wu, *et al.* ("Wu").

In view of the Examiner's comments regarding interpretation of Cummings' teaching of 60 seconds as meeting the "several second" limitation of independent claims 1 and 11, in order to advance this case to allowance the Applicants are requesting entry of amendments to claims 1 and 11 to limit the vapor expansion and condensation to "several tenths of a second," *i.e.*: "wherein expanding and condensing the vapor compound takes place within several tenths of a second ~~up to several seconds~~." Amendment of claim 3 to depend from claim 1 is also requested.

The Applicants respectfully submit that these amendments, which reflect the present invention's nearly instantaneous expansion and condensation of vapor (and the consequent highly rapid thermodynamic energy transfer which sterilizes the target objects), distinguishes the present invention over the cited art, as the present invention's thermodynamic approach to sterilization not taught or suggested by art which relies on a different physical process to sterilize objects, *e.g.*, Cummings' long duration (~1 minute) exposure to a substance which chemically sterilizes without the present invention's use of thermodynamic energy deposition. Accordingly, the Applicants submit that upon entry of the

requested amendments, claims 1-18 would be patentable over Cummings and Wu.

CONCLUSION

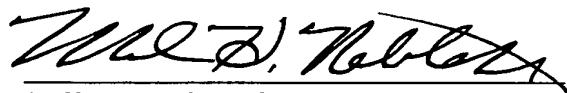
Entry of the foregoing requested amendments and issuance of a Notice of Allowance for claims 1-18 is respectfully requested.

If there are any questions regarding this response or the application in general, a telephone call to the undersigned would be appreciated since this should expedite the prosecution of the application for all concerned.

If necessary to effect a timely response, this paper should be considered as a petition for an Extension of Time sufficient to effect a timely response, and please charge any deficiency in fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 05-1323 (Docket # 029082.53055US).

Respectfully submitted,

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